

The Director Says...

The Impact of Austere Funding



We in Air Force Civil Engineering now head into the second half of FY 1968. As we do we become increasingly aware of the declining levels of certain resources available to us for our mission needs. It is clearer each day that these levels are perhaps the most austere of any in the recent past. The impacts of this "fact-of-life" are most keenly felt in: (1) our facility maintenance by contract, and (2) the supplies available to our in-service work force. Our total base maintenance capability is manifestly made up of this highly productive in-service force supplemented by contract support. In essence then, an adverse impact on either of these segments is of great significance—adverse impacts on both, however, produces a most serious situation. This is what we must face—a most serious situation. We can expect increasing evidence of deeper impacts as we move toward the end of FY 1968, and FY 1969 can well be equally or even more austere in terms of the resources we will have to work with.

Our task still is one of providing the Air Force with the best possible engineering support. Barriers which come in our way must be reduced and eliminated. Our "belt tightening" so far in FY 1968 has been most encouraging. Functioning in an "era of scarcity" so-to-speak, has been a great challenge to our managerial as well as to our technical and professional abilities at all levels. Progress has been and is being made at all levels by civil engineers everywhere in our renewed efforts to put "first-things-first" and to get more mileage from every dollar of Air Force resources passing through our hands. This is as it should be. However, the most impressive aspect of all of this has been the refreshing attitude which has been evidenced in our facing up to these problems. This attitude has been one of optimism and confidence. It has been one of belief that by harder work, keener management, wider imagination and stronger professionalism we will hold up our end as key members of the Air Force team.

There has been a steady decrease in Air Force funding of facility maintenance by contract since FY 1965. This decrease is somewhat related to expanding SEA needs which had to be met from the total resources available. Since 1965, SEA contract maintenance has increased over four fold. In that same period of time other facility maintenance by contract has decreased some 60 percent. We have been moving to meet this situation and in order to further improve our posture we are going to revalidate all "backlogged" maintenance. We are going to support proposed FY 1969 programs with improved project documentation. These are only a few illustrative actions which we are taking to somehow achieve a stable funding level in this area of about three times the FY 1968 level—our objective. We must do this to bring our backlog of work down to a more manageable level so that we can plan and effectively execute our programs as envisioned in the Total

Programming/Top Theme concept. This goal may be somewhat idealistic in the eyes of some. To each of us, however, it is essential that it be achieved in the very near future. To this end we all must continue our meaningful contributions.

In a like manner austere funding has reduced the levels of supplies available to us. A balanced and responsive flow of such supplies is needed to keep our civil engineer work force fully productive. Supply dollars for our support have decreased some 30 percent from FY 1965 to 1968. Stock levels and pipelines have also felt the impact. We believe that civil engineer supply support must be at a level somewhere about 50-60 percent above its FY 1968 level if we are to secure maximum return from our labor force. This is also a goal—one that is essential if we are to be able to meet the long term demands of the Air Force physical plant and preserve our capability to fly with top effectiveness—and to fight in the same way if need be.

Each year the problems we must face in carrying out our responsibilities multiply and become more complex. These current problems stemming from limited available resources only add to the list. However, they cannot be the basis for any discouragement—we in civil engineering have so much to do that there is no room for discouragement! Our attitude which pushes us in a constant search for new means of beating the challenges we face will prevail. Our strong enthusiasm to do our very best, our belief that this "best" is what the Air Force must and will have, and our faith in the future all meet to underscore this attitude which is vital.

With such an attitude we will further improve our system of priorities, our management effectiveness and our productivity. With such an attitude we will come up with new and improved systems and procedures as well as policies and goals. Then we shall see that the goals of today become the realities of tomorrow. The road ahead will not be easy, but with initiative and imagination we will take full advantage of its intriguing possibilities and its wider opportunities for civil engineering to do an even better job for the Air Force. This we must and will do with dedication and courage, and as real professionals. The facilities platform from which the Air Force can fly and fight if necessary will be there—we'll see to that!

So the barrier to the ready attainment of some of our key goals has been identified—its challenges are clear. At this juncture we recall that it has been said:

"People who aren't afraid to roll up their sleeves seldom lose their shirts."

We don't intend to lose our shirts—so back to work with that civil engineer attitude of "CAN DO—WILL DO!"

A stylized handwritten signature of R. H. Curtin.

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